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A Profile of Food Stamp Participation

Cup-Cans come to Idaho

By Ralph E. Vincent



IT'S A 100-MILE journey made almost daily over steep and narrow mountain roads to pick up food supplies for the small, remote schools in the rugged interior of Idaho. Donated pickups, mail trucks, freight vans and private cars take turns delivering bread, milk and other foods. But in spite of these obstacles, the children who live in this vast area dig into a complete, hot Type A lunch at school every day.

The Avery school district is one of several tiny isolated areas in the State that started the cup-can method of school food service last year.

The cup-can system was developed by the food industry in cooperation with FNS to help provide hot meals to youngsters in schools without kitchen or serving facilities. First introduced in 1970 in an 8-week test in several Philadelphia schools, the cup-can method has become a popular answer to food service problems of both urban and rural schools throughout the country.

The key to the system is a 7 1/2- to 8-ounce canned entree, which comprises a complete Type A lunch when supplemented with fruit and/or vegetables, bread, butter or fortified margarine, and milk. The entrees are heated in special low temperature ovens and can be eaten directly from the can.

Eating lunch from a cup-can is fun for kids everywhere, but children in the Avery district schools claim a bonus. They can order ahead each day for the meals they prefer the next day. Choices include such items as spaghetti and meat balls, beef stew, and chili—with a total of 19 entrees altogether.

The cans are stacked in the special



Eating lunch from a cup-can has become a favorite way to dine for Idaho youngsters. At Calder School, where all 20 students can fit on the front steps (below), lunch participation is nearly 100 percent. The lunches are prepared and served in a small all-purpose room, which doubles as cafeteria and auditorium.





A teacher-aide helps Avery students pick up their cup-cans and milk, and gives them servings of corn, applesauce, bread and butter

low-temperature ovens the day before they are served. At lunch time the canned entrees are heated, opened and served along with the cold portions of the meal. For those wanting something more, extra bread and peanut butter and jelly are readily available.

"For a long time we've been aware of the nutritional needs of children located in isolated areas and have been wanting to do something for them," says Cecil Olsen, Idaho State School Food Service Director. "The youngsters in outlying areas are just as entitled to food service as those in populous centers.

"We first heard that the cup-can system was being used in our neighboring State of Montana." He adds with a grin, "So we thought if they can do it, we can too, and probably better."

As a first step, Olsen and his staff contacted superintendents in school districts with small isolated schools with no food service. Several schools indicated they wanted to know more about how they might start a school lunch program.

Ruth Sturmer, a consultant with the State agency, met with the interested school leaders and explained the cup-can operation and other methods of supplying lunch in special situations. She also discussed the food components of the Type A lunch and a variety of ways to supplement the canned entrees.

Five of the six schools contacted began operating cup-can programs in the 1972-73 school year. Avery, the remaining school, began its program this year.

"The two or three things that you need are money to help finance it, volunteers to help defray costs, and, of course, the willingness to do it—this comes first," says Olsen.

Atlanta, the smallest and most remote of the six schools that started the canned lunch program, is perched high in the mountains north of Boise. The tiny hamlet (population 50) is usually snowed-in from the first of November through March. Two-way radio communication with the sheriff's office in Mountain Home, 50 miles away, is the only link the isolated community has

after snow covers all of the roads.

In especially bad winters the first sight of the town is stove pipes sticking up out of the snow. In the event of an emergency, a helicopter is dispatched to take in medical or other necessities.

The cup-can lunch program worked well in this remote community. Unfortunately, however, school is not operating this year. The teacher moved into the city so her son could attend high school, and no replacement has been found.

The 1,500 square mile Avery school district enrolls 78 children in three schools. Clarkia lies over the mountain range to the south side of the vast district and is a relatively short distance as the crow flies from Avery, but an 80-mile drive by road.

Both Avery and Calder are situated on a meandering road along the shadowy St. Joe river about 50 miles from St. Maries.

The narrow roadway is gouged out of the mountainside beside the river, and the last 30 miles is unpaved, pot-holed forest road. Saw-toothed peaks soar to more than

6,000 feet elevation, and the surrounding mountain ranges teem with deer, elk, moose, bear, cougar, and other big game animals.

It's easy to see why the main difficulty in running a lunch program in these isolated areas is transporting supplies. The canned entrees are delivered by an auto-freight, operated by a trucking company in Spokane. The auto-freight runs once a week—and only if it has a full load. Any overflow freight is put on the mail truck, a 4-wheel drive pickup with a box on the back, that makes daily deliveries of bread and milk to the schools.

"But if the freight misses the truck, the delivery gets postponed," explains Philip Stanley, superintendent-teacher at Avery. "So it's a real problem—a day-to-day problem."

Stanley is a firm believer in school lunch's role in the education program. "It's working out real well," he says. "The facilities are rather small, but will suffice, and lunch is a valuable addition to the total school program."

Last year the school operated a commodity-only lunch program, but Stanley says, "It was always a losing proposition." And only about half of the students ate the lunch.

This year the superintendent reports: "Kids think it's fabulous. You can tell by the number eating. Practically everyone eats at school, which is remarkable when you consider that they all live within walking distance."

The children who live in these remote communities are close to nature, as some visitors learn. While an official from the State agency was making a review of the lunch program at one of the small schools, he returned to his car to find an extra passenger. As he checked the small trailer hitched behind the car, he found himself eye-to-eye with a large bear. As he stood momentarily riveted to the spot, he heard chuckling and laughter from a group of children nearby. It seems that they had coaxed their pet bear into the trailer just to surprise the visitor. He was surprised—but felt much better when, shouting with laughter, they led the bear away. ☆

County builds careers in food help.

HOW DOES A former public welfare recipient relate to the needy?

"With empathy, but not sympathy," said Louise Schaal, a former public assistance recipient who is now a food stamp program officer in the Blue Earth County, Minnesota, welfare office.

Without a moment's hesitation, her co-worker, Bonnie Foudray, agreed. Both felt that being former public aid recipients gave them a special understanding of others' problems that is invaluable in working with those in need of food help.

The food stamp program in Blue Earth County is administered by FNS

in cooperation with Minnesota State Department of Public Welfare. It is a matter of convenience, according to Ms. Foudray, to have the food stamp program headquartered at the welfare office. However, they are housed separately in some counties.

Working themselves off public assistance rolls and into self-supporting positions demanded considerable effort and determination on the part of the young women. But they were greatly encouraged by the cooperation of county welfare director Allen Sigafus. Sigafus is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of County Officials and of the Welfare Steering Committee, and has served as president of the Welfare Directors Affiliate.

He urged both of the young women, who were receiving welfare payments under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (AFDC), to return to school under the Work Incentive Program (WIN) of the U.S. Department of Labor. He was convinced that with additional training the women could become self-supporting and valuable employees.

Both were eager for the opportunity. As Ms. Foudray said, "I wasn't on welfare for a ride, but did need help to reconstruct my life . . . to put my life back together."

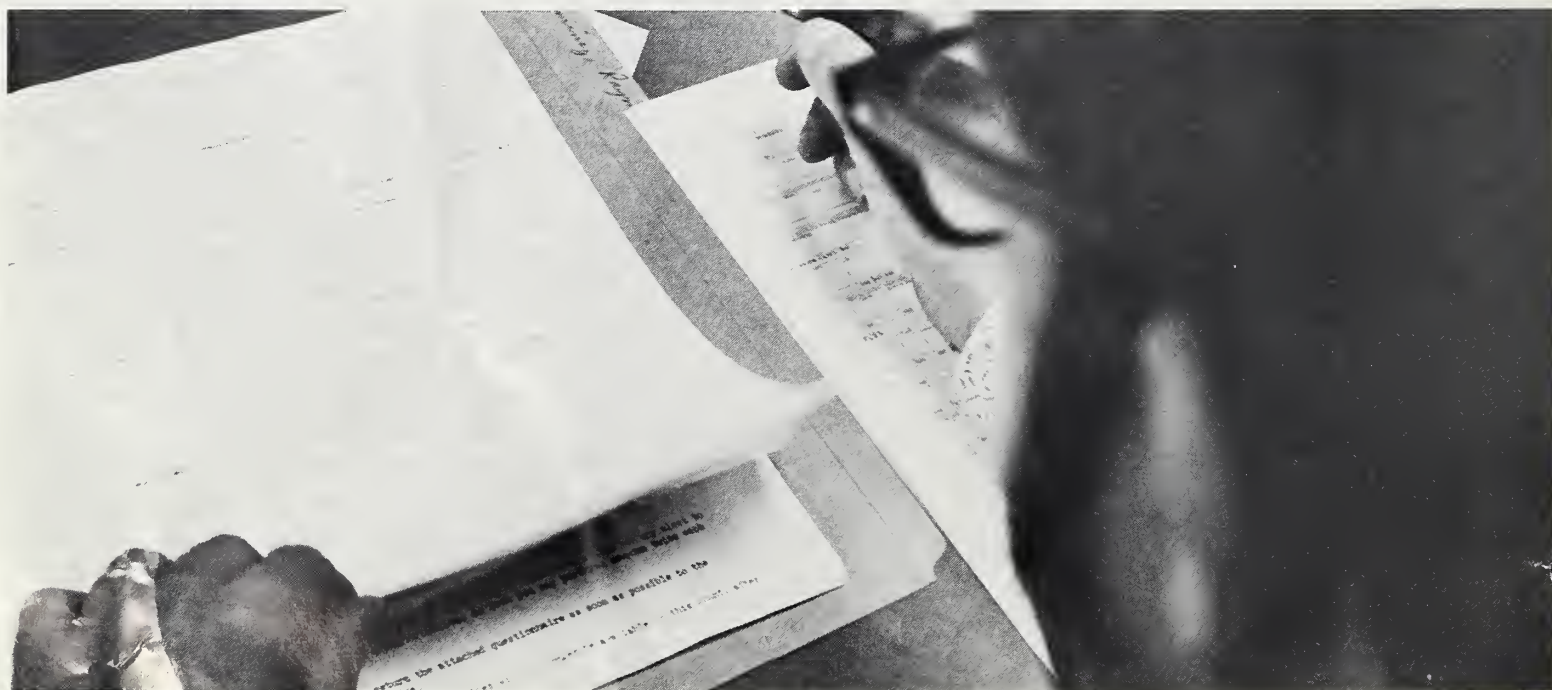
Both young women attended Mankato Commercial College, and when their scholastic records substantiated his judgment, Sigafus offered them jobs. Now, in addition to handling food stamp certification work in the office, one of the women is also in charge of the agency's WIN Program.

However, they are not the first welfare recipients that Sigafus has employed, and indications are that they will not be the last. He believes that former welfare recipients can better relate to welfare clients. The first welfare recipient that he hired as a food stamp worker was promoted to senior case aide before moving to another county. While all of his selections have not been equally successful, he believes that the average so far is definitely encouraging. ☆

food stamp team speeds certification!

By Ronald J. Rhodes

In each county they visit, the mobile food stamp certification workers must find space to work. During a trip to Oklahoma City to help with the area's large caseload, team leader Joe Garrison (right) discusses space and working arrangements with a local food stamp officer. In reviewing food stamp applications (below), the team makes sure that expenses such as rent or medical bills are indicated.



THE EXPRESSION, "Experience is the best teacher," must have been in the minds of Oklahoma State officials when they decided to form a floating food stamp certification team last February.

Oklahoma's first two food stamp programs opened in October 1972 in Tulsa and Oklahoma Counties—two of the most densely populated counties in the State.

"With an overwhelming backlog of applications developing, we decided that some plan of action must be taken for a smoother operation in other counties entering the program," said L. E. Rader, director of Oklahoma's Institutions, Social and Rehabilitative Services Administration—the State agency which administers the food stamp program.

The floating food stamp team consists of a supervisor—Joe Garrison—and five staff members from the State agency's division of assistance payments. The six-member team goes to a county in advance of the food stamp opening to help county welfare officials process applications. And if a backlog develops after the program begins operating, the certification team returns to do follow-up work.

When they're not opening a new food stamp county, they work with counties which have a large caseload. From February to August the team assisted in 17 counties and processed more than 2700 cases.

"Some cases can be processed in a matter of minutes, while others take days and sometimes weeks," pointed out team leader Garrison.

In certifying applicants for the food stamp program, he explained, the State of Oklahoma requires verification of income by receipts and

other materials. This sometimes presents a problem for the applicant, and the team works especially hard to help get this information.

"However, we have a certain advantage over the local staff," Garrison said. "We are not distracted by telephones or matters other than certification, so we can move at a faster pace."

Not always, though. After an elderly lady in Tulsa called repeatedly about the type of information needed to verify income, Bill Plummer, one of the floating team members, suggested that she bundle up her receipts and mail them to him, so he could sort them for her. She did—and he spent an entire day going through five envelopes packed full of receipts. "I learned my lesson on that one," laughed Plummer.

Among the most difficult persons to certify are the self-employed. Small farmers or day laborers who do not get regular employment checks often do not have receipts.

Another frequent problem is getting verification of medical expenses for elderly applicants. Often a team member has to call the patient's doctor or druggist for information.

"Almost without exception these people are very cooperative and helpful," Garrison said. After getting repeated inquiries for verification of medical expenses, one pharmacist sent a bottle of aspirin to the county welfare office, marked: "For the food stamp workers."

In each county the team must find space to work. The team members need access to telephones and prefer to work in the same room since this offers a chance to exchange ideas and discuss any problem cases.

"But we interview the client pri-

vately if at all possible," the team leader explained.

Every situation is different. The team's work ranges from Oklahoma County, which has a large staff devoted entirely to the food stamp program, to small counties in which the administrator and a clerk handle all the welfare programs.

Each case is different, too. Garrison pointed out that part of their schedule involves educating the applicant about the program.

"We often have to emphasize that the person does not have to buy the full amount of food stamps for which the household is eligible," he said. The team arranges for twice a month purchasing of food stamps when this is an advantage to the food stamp user.

"The work is full of surprises," said the team leader. "One woman we had certified to get \$38 worth of food stamps for \$26 returned and wanted her case closed. She thought she was cheating her local grocer out of \$12."

Another recipient double-checked to make certain she was really supposed to get \$94 worth of food stamps for \$12.

In addition to their regular certification visits this year, the group also worked one week in Tillman County helping certify emergency food stamp cases after two tornadoes struck the town of Frederick.

Myrl Hill, the State agency's administrator for Oklahoma County is most enthusiastic about the team's success in helping with the county's large caseload.

"We once had 1200 pending applications," he said. "After the third visit by the team, we had the backlog down to workable status." ☆

Food Stamp Participation● aPROFILE

By Loretta Rowe and John Galvin

population during the last 5 years.

Between 1968 and 1972, the food stamp program grew to be a national program of major impact and importance. In 1968, the program served approximately 686,000 households. By June 1972, participation had mushroomed to 3,555,000 households, showing a 418 percent increase.

These households included about 2,663,388 persons receiving more than \$46 million in coupons in October 1968, and about 11,724,925 persons receiving more than \$294 million in coupons in June 1972. Chart 1 (page 11) illustrates the increase in participation during these years.

This dramatic growth resulted from a combination of major program modifications and expansion into new areas.

In calendar year 1969, USDA reduced the amounts families with incomes under \$70 paid for their coupons and increased coupon allotments. Effective in early 1970, the Department further reduced purchase requirements so that no family paid more than 35 percent of its income for its coupon allotment.

These were early steps in a series of modifications aimed at liberalizing program benefits to ensure that participants received sufficient food purchasing power.

The impact of these modifications on participation is somewhat obscured in the profiles because of the extensive program expansion to 768 new project areas during calendar years 1969 and 1970. However, the effect of the increased benefits can be seen in the average per person bonus coupon value (the difference between the amount paid for coupons and the coupon allotment). In October 1968 the average bonus

Program Growth

WHO ARE WE REACHING?

That's what program administrators need to know in order to ensure the effectiveness of any program designed to assist people in need.

To answer this question, the Food and Nutrition Service periodically surveys the food stamp population and compiles profiles of program participation. The profiles identify and measure changes and trends within the food stamp population, especially in connection with various program modifications.

The profile technique was initiated on an experimental basis in the fall of 1968. Since then, these periodic surveys have shown that in spite of some major changes and rapid and extensive program growth, the food stamp population has remained fairly stable with regard to a number of characteristics—including income levels and public assistance status. However, there has been a general trend toward smaller household sizes.

A summary of program growth will provide a background for measuring the changes in the food stamp



coupon value was \$6.45 per person; in October 1970 it was \$13.50.

The next major program changes were announced on January 11, 1971, when the President signed the Food Stamp Act (P.L. 91-671). In addition to incorporating into law some of the earlier administrative program modifications, the Act mandated the following:

- ☆ Issuance of free food coupons to the poorest of the poor.

- ☆ Establishment of national eligibility standards.

- ☆ Provision for purchase of a portion of the monthly food coupon allotment.

- ☆ Requirement that States engage in outreach programs.

- ☆ Provision for the withholding of the purchase prices of coupon allotments from public assistance checks if recipients so elect.

- ☆ Provision to permit elderly handicapped persons to use food coupons for meals from certain non-profit meal delivery services.

Again the program was made more accessible and attractive to low-income households, and again, participation grew. The 1971 profile shows a 27 percent increase in household participation over 1970, while the June 1972 profile shows a further gain of 22 percent in relation to 1970, making the overall growth 49 percent during the 2-year period. Also during 1971 and 1972, a total of 206 counties joined the food stamp program.

Because of these major program modifications, it was expected that there would be major changes in various characteristics of the food stamp population, particularly with regard to their relative income levels and public assistance status.

However, the changes that are recorded by the profiles are not major and may possibly be within the realm of statistical deviation. The one major characteristic which did show a significant change was size of participating households.

Income Levels

The 1969 and 1970 program modifications were intended to

aPROFILE



make the program more accessible to households at the lowest income levels. However, the vast program expansion clouded the measurement of the effects of these modifications on participation.

The program profile of 1970 shows a surge in the number of households purchasing at the minimum purchase level (monthly income of \$0 to \$30). There were 177 percent more households purchasing at this level in 1970 than in 1968, and there was a similar spurt in the \$30 to \$100 range.

Surprisingly, this increase in lower income level participation did not keep pace with the overall program growth of 247 percent. Consequently, participation of lower income level households decreased in proportion to the total number of participating households. In 1968,

7.11 percent of participating households fell into the minimum purchase level, while in 1970 only 5.68 percent of the households fell into this group. In the \$30 to \$100 range, the 1968 proportion of 27.25 percent dropped to 22.36 percent in the year 1970.

Thus, the vast program expansion and the changing nature of program participation caused a decline in the proportion of households participating at the lowest income levels, although actual participation at these levels increased significantly.

Since the program expansion in 1971 and 1972 was not as great as the previous period, the later profiles do show some of the response of lower income households to the increased accessibility of the program. Chart 2 (page 11) compares the proportions of households par-

ticipating at the various income levels as shown by the four program profiles.

It should be noted that even this picture is not precise because the program changes also had the effect of increasing the reported income levels of most participating public assistance households.

This was true because under the changes many items of income, which were exempt under HEW public assistance standards and therefore not reported, were included for food stamp program purposes. Thus, the increase in participation of lower income households cannot be clearly distinguished by the comparative profiles.

Nonetheless, the 1972 profile clearly shows the reversal of the previous movement from lower income levels to the mid-income levels (\$100 to \$250). In 1972, there was marked increase in participation of households with incomes under \$100 while the mid- and upper-income levels decreased proportionately.

Household Size

The profiles have clearly shown that a steady decrease in the proportionate participation of households containing six or more persons coupled with a steady increase in households containing two and three persons have diminished the average food stamp family size.

The average has gone from 3.9 persons in 1968 to 3.7 in 1970, 3.5 in 1971, and 3.3 in 1972.

Chart 4 illustrates the trend toward the participation of smaller households.

A primary cause of this trend can be found in the Department's efforts to make the program more attractive and accessible to the elderly. The increase in the proportion of the total number of participants comprised of persons from one- and two-person households witnessed the success of these labors.

In 1968, individuals from one- and two-person households accounted for about 15 percent of the total number of food stamp participants. In 1972, the proportion

had climbed to about 21 percent, and the efforts of the recently completed Project Find campaign to locate needy elderly have most likely hiked the proportion above the 1972 level.

Public Assistance Status

In spite of the fact that public assistance households are automatically eligible for the food stamp program without regard to their income or assets, participation of non-assistance households increased at a higher rate than public assistance households.

Between 1968 and 1972, the respective increases in non-assistance and public assistance households were 442 percent and 414 percent.

However, this difference in the public assistance growth rate has not significantly altered the public assistance households' majority position in relation to total participation, as shown by Chart 3.

In 1968, public assistance households accounted for 66.6 percent of total participation, and in 1972 they made up 66.1 percent of participating households.

Anticipated Changes

The Department anticipates that Public Law 93-86, the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act which was signed into law on August 10, 1973, will have a major effect on participation.

Under the Food Stamp Act as amended by P.L. 93-86, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients whose SSI incomes equal or exceed their income from food stamp and public assistance benefits for December 1973 will not be eligible for food stamps.

Since the incomes of the SSI recipients who live with households participating in the food stamp program will no longer be counted for food stamp purposes, average income levels should show a drop. Additionally, since the persons who will no longer be eligible for the program, for the most part, will be former recipients of aid to the aged,

blind, or disabled, there should be a radical change in the proportions of assistance and non-assistance households. The public assistance households, in all probability, will no longer continue to make up the majority of the food stamp population.

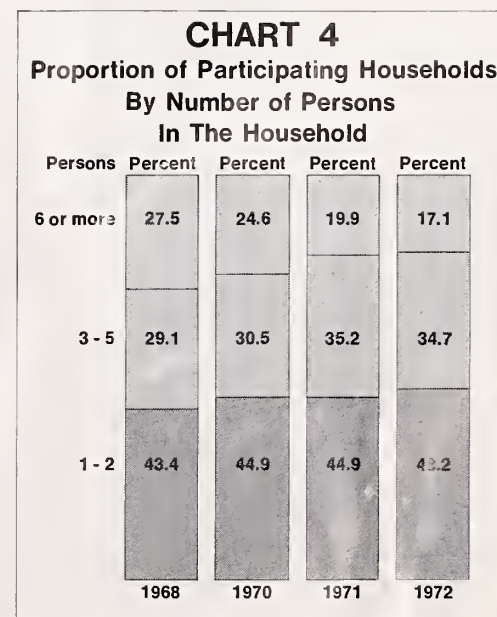
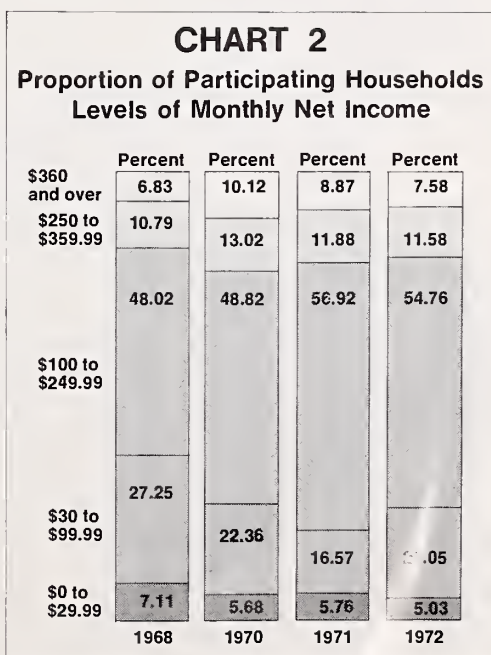
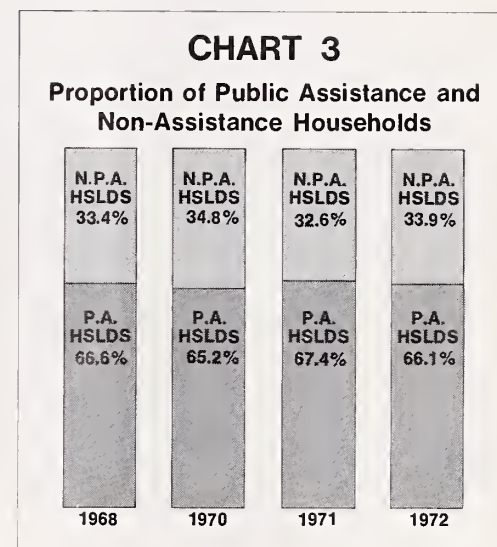
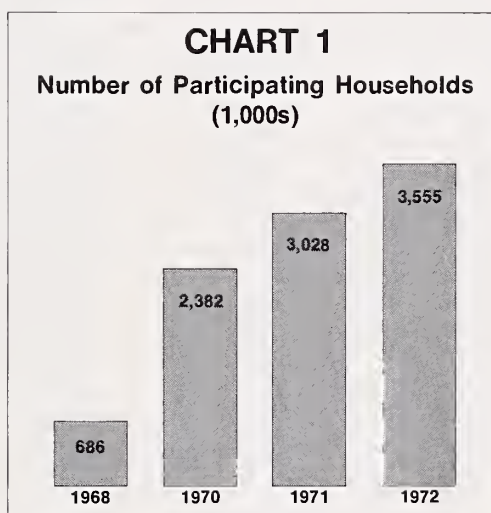
Finally, since most of the elderly persons who will no longer be eligible belong to one- and two-person households, the trend towards smaller household sizes may well be reversed.

It is possible, however, that as has happened in the past, program expansion may obscure the actual effects of the major program changes. Since Public Law 93-86 mandates a nationwide food stamp program by June 30, 1974, program expansion in the coming year may

exceed any previous growth rate. More than 800 political subdivisions currently operating food distribution programs must be converted to the food stamp program by June 1974.

For a program which currently provides more than \$330,000,000 in coupons per month (55 percent of which consists of bonus benefits) to about 12.5 million persons, such a surge in growth heightens the pressures on program administrators to know which people the program is reaching. Food stamp profiles will continue to play a vital role in measuring this growth. ☆

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For That Ethnic Flavor

By Benedicto Montoya



Serving thousands of Asians in the Bay Area, these San Francisco stores were quick to re-

spond to food stamp regulations, which enable participants to buy imported foods.

in SOME PARTS OF the city they might be called gourmet shops—the imported foods that line their shelves destined for the dining room tables of families wanting an occasional varied fare. But in thousands of neighborhoods where ethnic groups have congregated, they are simply corner stores, a place to buy the ingredients necessary for the family meal.

Until recently, food stamp program participants could not use food coupons to buy the imported foods stocked by these stores. Coffee, tea, cocoa, and bananas were the only exceptions.

For some people this restriction meant altering their dietary habits, spending monies allocated for other necessities, or simply not participating in the food stamp program even though they were eligible.

New regulations, mandated by the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973, redefine eligible foods as any food or food product—domestic or imported—for human consumption. (Alcoholic beverages and tobacco are specifically excluded in the legislation.)

How will these new regulations affect the buying habits of food stamp participants?

Among those who work closely with various low-income ethnic groups, the general consensus is that the new regulations will not cause a sudden switch from domestic to imported foods. But they will make it easier for participants to purchase the ingredients that give domestically produced staple items authentic ethnic flavor. The dollar value of these items will remain a small part of the monthly food bill.

Virginia Leong, a nutritionist with a San Francisco health clinic, provides some examples. A Chinese family can purchase black beans for 25 cents and use them in a variety of dishes for many weeks. A bottle of imported soy sauce can last for a couple of months. "The family," she explains, "is still going to purchase rice grown in Texas and vegetables from California."

Mrs. Leong expects that being able to use food stamps to buy imported foods will help low-income families to increase the palatability and quality of their meals.

But, she says, the most dramatic effect the new regulations will have on San Francisco's low-income Chinese is increased self respect.

Often when a low-income Chinese housewife went to the cashier with



her selection of foods, she was told that certain items could not be purchased with food stamps because they were imported. For many, especially those that spoke little or no English, this was embarrassing—"a loss of face."

There are some 40 Chinese-operated grocery stores in a 12-block area in San Francisco's Chinatown. To the tourists who flock to this small part of town, the cooked ducks hanging in shop windows, thousand year eggs packed in wooden boxes, and the varied produce of the countries of the Far East are a source of curiosity and amazement. Yet, the shops are not merely tourist attractions—but working, busy stores servicing the needs of thousands of Asians living in the Bay Area.

According to FNS food program specialists, the lifting of the import ban will encourage the participation of these grocers in the food stamp program, and enable them to better serve the area's low-income residents.

Eddie Lee, food program specialist in the San Francisco field office, estimates that the imported foods stocked by these stores average about 60 percent with some stores stocked with 90 percent imported foods. Some grocers who stocked primarily imported foods had continued to participate in the program because the sale of domestically produced rice made it an asset. However, many others chose not to apply for authorization.

Lee cites the case of one retailer who was authorized to participate in the food stamp program when it first began in San Francisco in 1966 but withdrew soon after. When he learned that eligible foods would now include imported items, he immediately applied for food stamp authorization and was back in the program within a week after the new regulations went into effect.

In an informal survey of a dozen stores in Chinatown, Lee found that retailers were happy with the new regulations. They reported less customer confusion at the checkout counter and expected an increase in business. Many have been telling

their customers about the revised food stamp regulations.

Marshall Lowe, district manager of the San Francisco district, points out that the new regulations will have a greater impact on certain area residents. While there are many Chinese and Asians who can get by on an American style diet, he says, there are others who "still eat Chinese style three times a day." To many low-income Chinese, especially the elderly and those who have maintained traditional cultural habits, it is still important to follow ethnic dietary patterns.

Formerly officer-in-charge of USDA's FNS office in Hawaii, Lowe adds that Asian food stamp program participants in Hawaii will benefit from the lifting of the ban more than Asians in other States because their dietary habits are more traditional. In Hawaii, an equivalent store to one of the mainland's giant supermarkets has bins full of Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese foods, which are used in preparing traditional family meals.

Since different ethnic groups have different dietary habits, the lifting of the import ban will have a greater impact on some groups than others. For example, FNS food program specialists in California do not expect the new regulations to have a great impact on most Mexican-American communities. Except for a few preferred imported spices, most foods necessary for the Mexican diet are produced in this country.

And, as is common in the sizable Mexican population of California's San Joaquin Valley, most Mexican-American families do not maintain a rigid ethnic diet. They eat complete Mexican meals once or twice a week—and only on special occasions prepare complete ethnic meals using mostly imported foods.

Food program specialist Simon Escamilla, from the FNS field office in Fresno, knows of only one store in his project area that carries a full line of Mexican food items. Most Mexican-owned stores, he says, carry no more than 20 percent of their inventory in imported foods, and many of these items are condiments and spices.

The regulations will have a more significant impact on many native Americans—Navajo and other tribes of the Southwest; Eskimo, Aleut and the Tlingits, Haidas and other Indian groups in Alaska. Because of the lack of supplies of fresh meat and refrigeration, these groups need to purchase foods that are easily stored and used. Canned corned beef meets these requirements—and is a favorite dietary staple.

Few Americans would class canned corned beef with such exotic foods as Hoisin Sauce, pickled ginger, or dried seaweed. However, although corned beef is a common food, available at most grocery stores under familiar American brand names, there are no domestically-produced supplies of canned corned beef. The major source of canned corned beef is South America.

Until the new food stamp regulations went into effect, canned corned beef was on the list of ineligible imported foods. Members of native American ethnic groups point out that one reason why they did not participate in the food stamp program was because they could not use coupons to purchase canned corned beef.

Joanna Demmert, FNS food program specialist in Southeast Alaska, is a native Alaskan, a Tlingit. She explains that many Alaskans continue a preference for canned corned beef even after fresh meats and refrigeration are readily available. They like the flavor of the canned meat, and can use it to make hash, stews, oriental dishes, and a variety of other meals.

When the food stamp program was begun as a pilot program in 1962, its purpose was to utilize America's agricultural abundance while enabling low-income households to purchase more and better food. While participating families have been able to eat better for less under the import restrictions, many of America's various ethnic groups have utilized other monies to make their meals ethnically palatable. The lifting of the import ban will make it easier for these food stamp participants to prepare the meals their families enjoy. ☆

A COORDINATED APPROACH TO CHILD NUTRITION

"SOMEONE NOTICED THAT the children seem noisier now. I think it's because they have more energy," said Dorothy Hudson, child development coordinator for Lady's Island Elementary School in Beaufort County, South Carolina.

She was noting progress made since 1971, when the county school system began a 3-year pilot project called "Better Minds through Better Health."

The project was part of Beaufort County's answer to the national concern for poverty-related health and nutrition problems. It was designed to coordinate existing community resources available to help low-income children. And Lady's Island Elementary School was one of four elementary schools selected to take part in the project.

Under the program, child development coordinators are stationed at each of the participating schools.

They see that the children get physical examinations, and refer them to the appropriate community health agencies when a problem is spotted.

The coordinators also work with teachers on health and nutrition education programs. For instance, Mrs. Hudson provides teachers with background information to use in their lessons, and helps them conduct health and nutrition demonstrations and other related activities in the classrooms.

Since the project began 2 years ago, however, the nutritional status of the children has been upgraded through additional food as well as instruction.

Nancy Rabert, supervisor with the South Carolina Office of School Food Services points out that the National School Lunch Program has been well established for many years in Beaufort County.

Not counting a high school which was on split sessions and did not serve many lunches, about 80 percent of the students in the county school system took part last year in the lunch program. Of these students, about 70 percent received their lunches free or at a reduced price. In all, over 1.04 million lunches were served last year in Beaufort County.

At Lady's Island Elementary, participation in the lunch program has been even better, with 99 percent of the 477 children that attended the school last year eating lunch daily. Eighty-eight percent of these children ate free or reduced-price meals.

When the "Better Minds through Better Health" project began, the four participating schools also started serving breakfast each morning under FNS' school breakfast program. And when the program proved successful, it was expanded to four additional Beaufort schools.

Last year, about 72 percent of the 2,882 students attending these eight schools ate breakfast each day, and about 95 percent of these children received their breakfasts free or at a reduced price.

At Lady's Island Elementary, the figures were even more impressive, with 87 percent of the children eat-

ing breakfast daily last year—97 percent free or at a reduced price.

"When you get right down to it, lack of adequate nutrition was the biggest problem when the project started," said Iris Emery, a visiting nurse for Beaufort County Schools. "What a difference having breakfast makes!"

"Before the program began, the majority of these children didn't eat breakfast," explained Florence Browne, who has managed the cafeteria at Lady's Island Elementary since the school was built in 1964. "Their parents worked, and left them on their own.

"The children have gained weight, I'm sure of that," Mrs. Browne added. "They used to be so lifeless when they came in for lunch, it seemed like they could hardly move. They also behave themselves better, and they have more energy." ☆

Lady's Island students set the table and pick up their lunches at the serving area.



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